

Dialogue

The Right to Misrepresent

DONALD DENOON

Empowering Imaginations

GREG DENING

Tradition in the Politics of the Pacific: Interviews with Simione Durutalo and Bishop Patelesio Finau

RORY EWINS

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Much has been written in recent years on the subject of the politics of tradition in the countries of the Pacific. *The Contemporary Pacific* has played a prominent part in that debate, with an article by Roger Keesing in its first issue (1989) generating a considerable amount of discussion in academia. In my doctoral dissertation, "Tradition, Politics, and Change in Contemporary Fiji and Tonga" (1995), I sought to expand that debate by including the views of Islanders themselves—in this case, Fijians and Tongans. To that end I conducted a large number of interviews in the two countries over four months in 1993, attempting to discern what the concept of tradition means to Fijians and Tongans today and what role they think it should play in their politics. All of the interviews proved extremely interesting, but two were particularly noteworthy, in that they captured some of the last thoughts on this subject of two significant individuals who have since died.

The first, Simione Durutalo, was a sociology lecturer in the School of Social and Economic Development at the University of the South Pacific. Well known among Pacific scholars for his perceptive writings on politics and society in Fiji, Durutalo was also a prominent Fijian voice in the Fiji Labour Party until his death at the end of 1993. I interviewed him at the university on 24 May 1993. Durutalo provided a telling analysis of the politics of Fiji a year after its first parliamentary elections since the coup of 14 May 1987. He also spoke from his own personal experience about how the rise of educated nonchiefly Fijians is challenging the authority of Fijian chiefs.

The second, Bishop Patelesio Finau, was head of the Catholic Church in Tonga, and one of the most prominent advocates of democratic reform in that country. I interviewed him at the church's Totaimana Centre in

Nuku'alofa on 30 July 1993, two months before he died on 4 October 1993. He spoke of relations between Tongan commoners, nobility, and royalty, and about social changes he had observed in recent years.

Both interviews have been edited for publication. I have removed some passages (particularly in the second interview) that were off the topic or overly concerned with the current affairs of the day, leaving only more general discussion on matters of tradition and politics. My own thoughts on the matters discussed would be out of place in this context; the intent of this article is simply to present some of the thoughts of Durutalo and Bishop Finau, and it is offered in the hope that other researchers may find those thoughts as valuable as I have.

SIMIONE DURUTALO

A preliminary discussion of the political events of the day led to a discussion of the Great Council of Chiefs, the highest deliberative body for traditional Fijian chiefs, and its relationship with the political party it sponsored, the Soqosoqo Vakavulewa ni Taukei (SVT) or Fijian Political Party, which has governed Fiji since May 1992 with Rabuka as Prime Minister.

SD Most Fijians, and Rabuka in particular, put a lot of weight . . . on the decisions of the Council of Chiefs, although there's an increasing questioning of the Council of Chiefs now by other Fijians, particularly in the Fijian Nationalist United Front [FNUF], Butadroka and company.¹ They are creating a Council of Chiefs for Viti Levu to listen to their grievances, which they feel have not been listened to by the official Great Council of Chiefs.

Fiji is divided into three traditional kingdoms, or confederacies—alliances of *vanua*. There's the Tovata confederacy: Mara and Penaia both come from that.² Then there's the Kubuna confederacy, . . . and the Burebasaga confederacy. Since the coup there has been an attempt to create another confederacy for the Western region, the Yasayasa Vaka Ra confederacy. What you see now [is the Viti Levu Council of Chiefs] claiming that they represent three confederacies, . . . the Kubuna, Burebasaga, and Yasayasa Vaka Ra confederacies, as pitted against the Tovata confederacy, which is mainly Vanua Levu and Lau. So they see themselves as "we" and "they."

The Butadroka faction is worried that if Penaia steps down, which seems to be likely any time now, then another Tovata man, Ratu Mara, would come to the presidency, so that will create a lock on the Tovata leadership; [Fiji would] still have a Tovata prime minister, and still have a Tovata president. They have very strong objections to that. What they want is rotation of the presidency among the traditional *vanua*.

RE So even the opposition forces amongst Fijians basically accept that traditional political dealings between the confederacies is still the way they should be going.

SD Yes, unfortunately. There is no attempt to move toward a common tradition . . . , which would get away from the regional. It's getting into a bit of a nasty situation where . . . chiefs and commoners are looking at the cross-class alliances based on the *vanua*, and not so much at the commoner–chief traditional hierarchical relationship.

Since the coup there has been a swing to the right in the indigenous Fijians' setup. The trade unions have been weak. . . . That's the only other independent power base that any commoner Fijian could easily come [through], and usually the commoner–chief [focus] always comes through the trade unions, from the workers. The FNUF is not really trade union based but is very much rural Fijian based, and a lot of rural values [are] still very much tied to the chiefs, so the opposition is not between commoners and chiefs but between my chief and your chief, my *vanua* and your *vanua*. There is really no difference in belief about the paramountcy of Fijian interests over other races between the SVT and the FNUF.

RE A lot of people noted at the time of the coup that there was a change among Fijians, that they were becoming more questioning of the chiefs, which is one of the reasons why Bavadra was able to gain power.

SD That's definitely been reversed. The chiefly power that was waning was reinforced again, reorganized and restructured, which was what the whole military coup was all about. The Council of Chiefs now is a revamped Council of Chiefs; the chiefs have got more power by the 1990 Constitution than they ever had hopes for. In a sense the coup was a counterrevolution against what they defined as a breakdown of Fijian culture and custom, meaning the chiefs' power. They needed a strengthening of culture, a strengthening of *i tovo vakakavanua* [customs according to the way of the land], which is the Fijian way of doing things—epito-

mized by the chief, of course, because the apex of Fijian structure and culture is supposed to be the chief. So this has come back to reinforce itself. Now, how much of this reinforcement has been at the top as opposed to the Fijian masses down below is hard to [tell]. That [questioning attitude] hasn't totally gone out; it's still there, simmering at the bottom. The forces that were coalescing, that came to the surface in '87, have been dispersed by the power of the military coup. But it's still there; remnants of it are all over the place. And one thing that is certainly true is that the Fijians have become politicized. The reality of Fijian aspirations and grievances has come in, in another form: . . . it's now taken the form of these confederacies confronting each other.

RE What do you think the effect of having a commoner prime minister has been?

SD That's the saving grace of the Rabuka-Tovata [connection]; it holds together because people say, "Well, he's from Tovata but he's a commoner." The straw that would have broken the camel's back [would have been] if you had a Tovata chief as both prime minister and president. The whole thing would have been absolutely dead, because I don't think the people would have tolerated it. That's where Rabuka has been very smart lately; he's been trying to say, "I'm from the Tovata, but really I'm not a chief, I'm just like everybody else." His style of leadership also has changed from Mara's: he's more populist.

RE You mention the increased role of the Council of Chiefs. Some people of course point to the fact that it was created by Sir Arthur Gordon, that it's not even Fijian. Do you think there's an awareness of that, and that it would even be important to people?

SD I doubt that it would be important to people, although I must say that not many Fijians are aware that it's a colonial creation, except for Fijian scholars like me; down at the grassroots they really think it's an indigenous Fijian institution. But then it's like the *lotu*, Christianity, which has become Fijianized if you like. Yes, it was brought in by Gordon, but as a result of its evolution over a hundred years it's got a life of its own. It's so embedded in the Fijian psyche that it's pretty hard to get rid of it. The FNUF realized it; that's why they don't want to form a commoner [council]. They want not so much to deny the Council of Chiefs but to form another one that is going to address the issues which the other one won't.

RE There's a whole debate about the invention of tradition, asking if it's important whether traditions are invented or not. Perhaps the question is beside the point in Fiji? If everyone was aware of these things, would it matter to them?

SD Well, it wouldn't be true to say if [an institution] hasn't been there it doesn't matter. For example, when people were trying to form the Yasayasa Vaka Ra confederacy, the so-called traditional supporters were saying, "You can't form the Yasayasa Vaka Ra confederacy because that's not traditional, that's a new formation." So the Yasayasa Vaka Ra guys advanced the argument, "Well, yours was a colonial creation; . . . ours is also a modern creation but a hundred years after that; they are all modern creations anyway, it's not traditional." So in that sense the argument has been used to support the formation of another confederacy.

RE What happened to that argument? Did it just get lost, caught in the power play to build support for the new confederacy?

SD They bought off [the key people involved] and gave them lucrative posts, so it sort of died down in advance. But it's there; it's always been there, and it will emerge again at another time. People in the west [of Viti Levu] at the grassroots are always asking, "What happened to our confederacy?" At least in terms of local grassroots consciousness, it's still there, because they whipped it up. It can't go away from their minds, at least for the west. And the Fijian Nationalist United Front are now reviving it. . . . It's still very much a political issue in the west.

RE How is parliament working?

SD It's been quite a lukewarm parliament, in the sense that hardly any legislation has been passed. Very dismal amounts. If the American Congress hadn't passed any legislation, there would be rioting. They are just operating under the laws of the interim [postcoup] regime, reendorsing those; there's no new legislation as such, in the sense of a new initiative, on any subject at all. It's just been, if you like, an administrative parliament.

RE Has there been a difference in the tenor of debate between the House of Representatives and the Senate?

SD I think so. . . . The Senate doesn't really owe Rabuka anything, because they were not appointed by him, they were appointed by the so-

called Council of Chiefs. And Rabuka still hasn't got a hold on the Council of Chiefs; that's one institution that he still hasn't got a hold on in terms of its power base. Firstly, because of the presence of Ratu Mara, who tends to control the Council of Chiefs. I would guess that this will become increasingly clear as the Rabuka government goes on; he will need to have the Council of Chiefs in his pocket, because otherwise it's always sabotaging, attacking [his government] in the Senate. . . . It's really a weak flank for Rabuka, the Council of Chiefs and the Senate.

RE The Council of Chiefs is almost becoming a *de facto* third house of parliament.

SD It is a house of parliament. You're the first one to point it out, but it's a reality; a lot of people in Fiji for various reasons don't want to point it out. It really makes more important decisions than either house of parliament. Whatever the Council of Chiefs says, that is to be carried out; that's an important resolution.

Everybody's well aware, but then everybody doesn't point out, "How come this bunch of guys who were never elected by anybody now determine our fate?" We have this joke, our own parliament, sitting there, which we spent a lot of time fighting and campaigning for, but they're useless, in the sense that the Council of Chiefs can override any of their decisions.

RE Would there be any way for Fijians to try to keep a check on the Council of Chiefs?

SD I really don't think so, because there is really no mechanism for controlling the Council of Chiefs. The only other way is the way the FNUF have, which is to create a countercouncil, and challenge the legitimacy of the Council of Chiefs. Hopefully that will make them pay attention to some of the issues that they haven't paid attention to.

The FNUF is the only real danger to the official Council of Chiefs. It's been demonstrated in the last election, when the FNUF managed to grab a number of seats from them, and it's interesting that all of the seats which broke away were dissident provinces and were all in Viti Levu, none in the islands. They've now formed what they call the Viti Levu Island Council of Chiefs. So in some sense, the fact that the Council of Chiefs hasn't paid attention to the grievances of some provinces has been demonstrated in the election. Their Council of Chiefs candidates have lost in

Nadroga, where they lost two seats, in Rewa they lost two seats, in Ra they lost two seats, and in Suva they lost one seat. And then in Ba, Apisai Tora and his two other guys came very close to winning, [within] thirty votes. If you read between the lines, it's clearly a warning that not every Fijian is agreeable to the Council of Chiefs.

The Indians will become spectators to what will clearly be an internal bickering within the Fijian setup, increasingly much more acrimonious. That's the way I would see it developing in the next few years.

RE Clearly the people who have been building the new government see traditionalism as an important way of promoting Fijian nationalism. How much do Fijians agree with that? Perhaps when they see the impact of modern economic forces on everyday culture, they feel that one way to maintain their own identity is through the political culture of the chiefs?

SD In some sense, yes, because for some Fijians the revival of traditional culture is seen as a sort of refuge from modern economic forces, competition from other races, particularly the Indo-Fijians. It's always expressed in a sort of fatalistic way by the Fijians: "Well, if we let open competition come, we'll always lose out to the Indians, unless we use our culture or the power of the government or the power of the military to give us some [advantages]. Otherwise it's open competition, which these Indian guys are quite used to; that's why they will beat us hands down." So yes, it's clearly seen as a refuge, and a way of softening the impact of the modern world on them; as a shield under which they can take their time to progress.

I was just talking to somebody on the bus on exactly this subject, and he happened to say, "The way I see it is we can't ever beat these guys; we've got to use the government or something like force, particularly for this generation who are not educated; and then at the same time we have to educate our kids [so that they will] be able to stand on their own and meet the oncoming competition, both from the modern world and from other races."

This is the way they see the so-called positive discrimination in their favor; the paramountcy of Fijians, and so on. And there's an increasing awareness that this can only work for a certain short period of time.

RE So even though some people are taking a refuge in tradition now, there's still a recognition that change will come.

SD Right. And that's where there's a push now, in Fijian education and business. They say, "Well, the government should really push us in this direction, because then they'll open the whole thing up; otherwise we'll be shot." That's the feeling of the Fijians. It's certainly not "traditional culture forever," even by the ordinary people. They know that forces are intruding at the everyday level that they will have to give way to at some time. In the village, they are now more conscious than ever of how dependent they are on the modern world, money and so on; and they see that Fijians who get educated can [move] up in the world, and become leaders and important. So it's seeping through their consciousness. And of course [an educated Fijian] becomes important in the village council and sometimes he carries more weight than the chief when discussing [matters], because he's educated. The chiefs are really aware of this themselves. Before, they tended not to educate their sons; it was usually commoner Fijians [who did that]. But now they're beginning to realize that if they want to retain their position in the village setup they have to educate their son in school, because a commoner Fijian coming along will just push this chief aside. And the people also operate like this; they say, "The chief is not educated; [he's] not of much use nowadays; we'd rather take the word of this commoner Fijian. He's more educated, he knows the way of the world, and he'll lead us better than this uneducated chief here."

I'm seen as a Labour Party [person], but if I go in my village even my brothers will defer to me, although they are much more senior and one of them is about to be a chief. The people say, "We'd better listen to Durutalo; he might be [in an] opposition party but at least he knows about the modern world. He's educated, he's got an MA, he's a university lecturer, he teaches." Sometimes [I] clash with my brother, but I always carry the day. . . . Sometimes he's right and I'm wrong, but the people's perception is that I am more educated, I know the modern world, and he doesn't, although he is more senior and in traditional terms I should be listening to him. In fact, the fact that I am arguing with him is a breach of protocol. But then people say, "He's an educated guy; he knows that sometimes Fijian custom is wrong. Maybe that's why he's breaching the protocol, for our own good, in order to tell his brother this is wrong." So it's clearly penetrating at the rural level. In my case my brother is a chief and I'm nearly the chief, but I've clearly seen other cases where commoner Fijians have [rated over] the chief because they're much more highly educated; and this sort of woke up everybody, including the chiefs.

Despite all the custom, education is now highly valued among Fijians. . . . It's going to break into the Fijian hold, because the person who is educated will not necessarily be the [son of a chief]. It will be commoners from other places, and inevitably they will clash with the chief because of simple status. If they go into the village house, people will say, "You come and sit here with the chief," and the chief will get jealous. And when [the chief] says something, people will say, "Well, the other guy told us this other thing." So there's bound to be a clash somewhere; it's very rare [that where there's] an educated Fijian in the village, or district or even provincial level, that these two won't clash.

I'll give you an example: Last year we were debating on [some proposed legislation] in the provincial council in Ba, where Tui Vuda [a high chief] was. I was pretty new to the council. I explained the [legislation] and how bad it was, and so on. They had already endorsed it; the council had already passed the resolution. When I explained it, suddenly people demanded that a vote be taken again. Tui Vuda was trying to oppose that. He said, "No, we can't, we've already [endorsed it]. We can't rescind a resolution of the council." And the other people said, "Well, we ourselves made the resolution so we can rescind it. It's not gone up to Suva yet. What Durutalo's telling us are new facts that we were not aware of." So he had to give in to it.

If it was one of the other guys, even though he knew about it he wouldn't have spoken up, because of traditional protocol. I breached protocol when I spoke against it, but it was accepted because they said, "What do you expect: an educated guy, he's going to breach protocol, because that's what they've been taught in schools; breach protocol if you can say something which is better." Although they realized there was a breach of protocol, it was more tolerated from an educated person than if the breach of protocol had happened from one who they considered to be not an educated person.

The second thing was that they listened to me rather than Tui Vuda. I was fairly new, and quite young; I'm not a high chief like him. And I was able to carry the council, who rescinded the thing and opposed the legislation.

Also I notice in the council that whenever Tui Vuda talks he will be pro-SVT, and he will deny others their right to speak. But he never says, "Tell Simi to shut up," because he knows I can challenge him in the coun-

cil. And he also knows that that won't be seen as a breach of tradition by the other old guys there; it will be seen as, "What can you expect; it's like the *kai valagi* [white people]. What do you expect from *vakavalagi*? He doesn't know our *i tovo vakakavanua*." So this is increasingly being expected. And of course people like me take advantage of it to the full! But you know just where to go; there are certain [lines] that you can't go over. If an educated person tussles with the chief and they call each other names, that is acceptable in a formal council meeting, but not in a traditional ceremonial type of situation. You have to be quite clear [about] which things are acceptable at which social occasions.

An educated person is allowed to get away with a lot of things. That's why I can't forgive these other fellows who are not chiefs, are educated, but are sticking to tradition for their own personal interest. These are the really dangerous guys. I don't worry so much about the chiefs; I worry about these new commoner-Fijian educated guys who are using the traditional [setup] for their own [advantage]; that's a more cynical use of tradition. For the old guys, that's what they were brought up with—they honestly believe in that; sometimes you feel sorry for them. And they are generally good natured and good intentioned in their [attachment to] tradition, although it might make them look stubborn. But it's these other guys who are quite well aware they're just using tradition to advance whatever interest they have, political or whatever: these to me are the more dangerous guys.

BISHOP PATELESIO FINAU

PF One basic thing that tradition affects in modern politics is attitude. For example, chiefly attitudes toward commoners. In parliament [during] recent debates . . . one of the ministers, who is of chiefly rank, [was reported to have] said that one of the people's representatives should be boiled and baked in an *'umu*.

So there's that basic attitude of the high ranks looking down on the lower ranks. Theologically in the old days, for Tonga, only the chiefs survived death. They lived on after death. Commoners just disappeared. That attitude, while it's in the past, has carried over to the present, and into political life, and other ways in social life. . . . It's an attitude of suppression. Unfortunately the people also have that on the receiving end.

They are not really free to speak about the chiefs. . . . The less educated people are, . . . the more they are influenced by that spirit of the past. Often they don't know their rights.

RE These people have grievances against the nobles, but they're keeping them inside?

PF Definitely. They cannot voice them. Some of the things that people now are saying, and some of the things I actually said a few years ago: I was only voicing what so many people have in their hearts, but they cannot say. There's more openness today—you see it in newspapers. And of course some of the people's representatives in parliament are breaking new ground, which is very good.

Some of the people would be shocked [by that]. Some will be very happy, but others, especially older ones—they're so submissive, and this is the way they have been brought up, and therefore it's hard for them to accept commoners being outspoken.

You see some educated people overseas [who] because they benefit from the system don't like to criticize. Others also are afraid of changes, . . . because they have no other alternatives that they know of. They are afraid that if there will be changes they might be worse off.

So there are two ways: one is an oversubmissiveness and I suppose hopelessness, really, and the other one is more because . . . they have benefited from the present system. But in between you have all these others who see other alternatives. And perhaps some, also, because their situation is hopeless, join that, in hoping that a new situation will be better for them.

RE Are Tongans aware that their traditions have changed?

PF Yes and no. There are people who are dreamers. Romantics. They want to think that things don't change. They get up before people and talk like that; they say, "Tonga is still Tonga. Tonga will always be Tonga." Just that kind of sentiment.

There are people who are so biased about things Tongan, they don't want to change; they dream there's no change around. . . . They refuse to see the changes. Many of them see changes, but it looks all right, because it's the King [initiating it], it's the nobility, so they have the right to change.

RE There's still a very strong feeling for the King.

PF In some ways they think Tonga's the only place in the Pacific that has that, so whether it's right or wrong, it's a kind of uniqueness. They're more taken up with that, some of them, than whether it's good or bad. I suppose the thing is that people here in Tonga are not starving. They get on, and they know no better ways, and therefore they think it's all right. If they were driven by starvation and homelessness I'm sure it would make a difference.

RE Is there any threat that Tonga will see decreasing standards of living with increased population?

PF I believe there will be, but it's [some way off]. There are more people who have less and less. The gap between now and five years from now—I think it will be worse. Those who are badly off will be even worse off, and those who are well off will be even better off.

RE Have you seen a similar sort of development just in the last five years?

PF It's very easy to see that, yes. . . . Certainly there's a lot more broken families than, say, five years ago; and much more than, say, fifteen years ago. You can certainly say that there are weakening family ties already. I've seen some of that. For example, school fees [for] children. It's getting more and more difficult to get money for that, and you find people turning to the church. The extended family is not working, for whatever the reasons are, and therefore they go to find a new extended family [ie, the church] to fill in the gaps.

Something we didn't do before, but we have done in the last seven years, is [establish a Tongan arm of the charity] St Vincent de Paul. Because we began to see some families with the mother as head of the show, with the husband overseas, and after a while no more help coming in. There may be extended family, but they're not doing very much to help. Or sometimes elderly people are left here and not looked after properly [because their children] have gone overseas. And on top of that, there's people from the outer islands coming here: they don't have that extended family system that they have in their own islands. So for various reasons, we needed to have this St Vincent de Paul.

In that sense, the extended family is certainly waning. There are things

missing. But there are also things that keep the extended family system alive: funerals; weddings. It brings people in. They still have their ties. They come from overseas for funerals. On the other hand, the burden that goes with it, to provide food and gifts—sometimes the people's idea is a much bigger one than they can afford. It's good in the sense that it brings people together, the ties are there, but at the same time it can be a tremendous burden on families, a drain, because so many people come in and they have to reciprocate. You've got to provide some material welcome, but they don't have the means to do it. So they borrow money to hold these things, and afterwards they pay for it in the neck.

RE Has this had any effect on things like funerals and weddings, to make people reduce their plans?

PF Unfortunately not. The church is trying to reach some people, but it's difficult, because all we can do is recommend. . . . I can [speak] certainly within the church, but then [people say,] "That's a church thing." [They make a] distinction between church and cultural things. . . . If it comes to a [choice between] king, chiefs, and Christ, I often think that maybe poor Christ would lose out.

We went on a march to the King, when the parliament changed the constitution of Tonga to give passports [to non-Tongans]. Many people weren't interested in the right and wrong; they just thought the King must be right. It's almost that the King is infallible, he can't make a mistake. Of course we like our leaders to be blameless, but I think [here it is] over-exaggerated. You can't criticize; he cannot be wrong, he must be right. In parliament the Prime Minister said the King was nominated by God, therefore he can't be wrong. That attitude is prevalent. If you call it Christian, I don't know what kind of Christianity that is. But it's there. Some of the chiefs say, "I'm chief, therefore God made me a chief, and then I can't be wrong." And some people believe that.

RE Have you seen uniquely Tongan values that fit well with Christian teachings? Things like the communal way of life?

PF Yes, community. We're called the "Friendly Islanders;" that fits in well. But we have to get baptized, so to speak. For why do you smile, why do you serve people, why are you so friendly? Because you can get something from that? Because you have to make them think you're a great fellow? What is it? So you need to put Christian values into those. You could believe for the wrong reason. Or the extended family: they could

just hang around and get the benefits without really contributing. You have to do your part. . . . The church's role is to lead people to see the right reason to do things. I believe there are good people. The simple people in villages live very Christian lives.

At the end, I think, it is to do with justice, or dignity of people, the human rights. And of course when you do that it affects politics as well. It affects economics.

RE Some have said that church and state should be separated in Tonga.

PF There will always be some who would say that. Others will be happy. More and more people are beginning to look in the papers at letters people write. Some are trying to ridicule some of us at times, for what we do, and others write and defend us.

RE What sort of attitude does the Pro-Democracy Movement have to the churches? The secretary of the Pro-Democracy Movement [Simote Ve'a] is a prominent member of the Methodist Church. Is there any special relationship there?

PF No, I think not. . . . I would say there would be a few people who would be against it, but what I'm saying is that we support the Pro-Democracy Movement, not in the sense of being anti-King or anti-government but in the belief that it's a better system of government, if used properly. . . . The very fact that they're accountable to people; the fact that people can elect them and kick them out: that kind of thing cannot be done in the present system. . . . I suppose if the King did address those things, people would be satisfied. But because he hasn't, people want another system that will.

The church is for liberty, freedom, all that, and so tries to support a system that's going to do that. . . . Does that mean that we follow blindly? Not at all. If the people who are running for the Pro-Democracy Movement go wrong, the church also has to address that, so the church is nobody's ally. We support what is right.

RE Is it a particular problem in Tonga at the moment that some people feel that any attack on the government is an attack on them personally?

PF Yes, very much. They can't distinguish between the two. They've been there so long, they own it: it's them. They say, "You're talking about me." They can't see you're talking about the system, or talking about the job.

One of the ministers wrote a letter [to the church newspaper], and this was printed in the paper, and then I answered in the next. I printed his letter even though it was personally attacking me. [He intended] to rubbish democracy, and the things that I had said. . . . That was calculated to affect the voting. But we printed it knowing all that, because I was confident that the people are better informed. They will not vote because of me, or because of him, but they'll vote because of their conviction.

RE So the people distinguish between the individual and the position?

PF Definitely. I think the pro-government people did a lot of harm to their own cause by what they said against people. For example, the night before the [1993] election they put the Deputy Prime Minister on radio, and he was mentioning names of people and so forth. . . . I think the people just knew better. . . . Here on Tongatapu they chose the topmost candidates for democracy, one, two, three. Even in the King's estate area. I don't think it's anti-monarchy—people are just voting for what they know is better.

Notes

I have not indicated in the text those minor changes necessary when transforming any spoken interview into readable and grammatical text, though any significant alterations or insertions are in brackets. Similarly, only major omissions of a sentence or more are noted, either by ellipses or by a paragraph break. My questions were also edited. Naturally, I have striven to keep the text as close as possible to what was spoken (and to the meaning intended).

1 The leading figures in the FNUF at this time were Sakeasi Butadroka and Ratu Osea Gavidi.

2 Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara, formerly prime minister, was at that time vice-president of the Republic of Fiji (and later became president); Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau was president of Fiji until his death late in 1993.

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